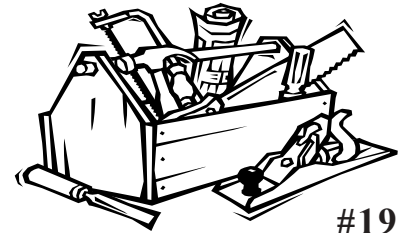


BUILDER'S BULLETIN

MAY 2003

PLANNING AND CODE ADMINISTRATION, GAITHERSBURG, MARYLAND


Gaithersburg
A CHARACTER COUNTS! CITY



TALL GRASS AND WEEDS

By Greg Ossont, Neighborhood Services Director

Chapter 17AA of the City Code requires all properties to be maintained free from weeds or other plant growth in excess of ten inches. This ordinance applies to all properties—residential, commercial, and even vacant parcels. Weeds are defined as all grasses, annual plants, and vegetation other than trees and shrubs. Obviously, the ordinance does not apply to plant growth in a cultivated garden. The code also requires the removal of any noxious weeds.

Builders should be aware that lots, parcels, and other areas under construction or development are expected to maintain these areas like any other property area. Upon notification, property owners are typically provided 48-72 hours to cut and remove tall grass and weeds. More time may be permitted at the code official's discretion. The penalty for violations of this code section is a \$100 fine, every day the violation exists.



Questions concerning this ordinance should be directed to Neighborhood Services at 301-258-6340 or neighborhoods@ci.gaithersburg.md.us

DECK PERMIT

By Greg Dennison, Plans Examiner

A coworker in our office recently had a memorable experience with a neighboring jurisdiction in obtaining a permit to construct a deck. Their permit approval turn-around time was 15 days for a simple deck!

Current turn-around time at the City of Gaithersburg for a simple deck is usually two days and approximately two weeks for a new house code and structural review. There are a few things to remember about building decks in the City:

- the frost depth for footings should be 30 inches, and
- decks should be designed for 60 pounds per square foot of live load plus 10 pounds per square foot of dead load.

If you are interested in building a deck, there is a City publication entitled *Deck Guidelines*, that can help you with the design and construction. The publication is available at City Hall or on the City website www.ci.gaithersburg.md.us

fyi

Before removal of **any** trees, please check with the Planning and Code Administration to determine if a tree removal permit will be required.

■
Maryland State General Contractor's Licenses expire on April 30. Please submit an updated copy of your license when applying for a permit in the City of Gaithersburg.

■
Contractors must submit an up-to-date copy of a Montgomery County Builders' License or State of Maryland License for New Residential Construction.

in this issue . . .

- Fire rated stairway enclosures
- Grading tips
- Open burning—dos and don'ts
- Site development approval or permit?
- Tall grass and weeds

FIRE RATED STAIRWAY ENCLOSURES

By Cliff Lee, Senior Plans Examiner

When designing or building multi-level commercial use buildings, there aren't many things more important to protect life safety than exit stairways, or as the codes call them, fire-rated exit enclosures. Many of you involved with commercial construction have some knowledge of fire-rated stairway enclosures. For example, you may know that buildings that are 3 stories or less require a one-hour rated enclosure to protect exit stairs, while buildings 4 stories or more require a 2-hour rated enclosure. In the "good old days," most fire-rated stairs were constructed with concrete block walls. Over time, many architects and builders have switched over to stud and sheetrock enclosures. Why? The simple reason is that dry-wall systems tend to both go up faster and cost less money than block walls. As far as test laboratories are concerned, drywall systems work just as well as concrete block walls. For that reason, building and fire codes have long allowed both types of fire rated walls, as long as they are tested and approved by a nationally recognized testing agency.

In the field, however, City inspectors frequently find problems with the installation of the stud and drywall assemblies. It seems they are proving to be too much of a temptation for the various trades to use for their own purposes. Correcting an improperly installed fire rated stairway enclosure *after* it's already built can be a major headache, costing considerable loss of both time and money. In an effort to avoid that kind of situation, here's a list of do's and don'ts regarding fire-rated stairway enclosures.

continued on page 4

OPEN BURNING —DOS AND DON'TS

By Ivan J. Humberson, P.E., City of Gaithersburg Fire Marshal



Often times, when people have questions regarding open burning, they call the City of Gaithersburg Fire Marshal's Office for guidance. However, the regulation of and permitting of open burning throughout Montgomery County (including within the City of Gaithersburg) is handled by the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection.

In order to minimize air pollution and preserve the health and well being of the people that live and work in Montgomery County, the regulations on open burning are quite specific and quite strict. It is completely prohibited to burn hazardous materials, household trash, construction debris, leaves, lawn or garden trimmings, tires, asphalt shingles or tar paper, brush or other plant life. However, by permit only, it is permissible to burn agricultural debris directly related to agriculture business on land that is classified as agricultural for tax purposes. In addition, bonfires or similar recreational fires are allowed, but a permit is required, and all permitted fires must be at least 1,500 feet from adjacent properties and well traveled roadways.

Some small fires are allowed without obtaining a permit, but these are limited to fires used for outdoor cooking, small recreational fires for religious or scouting organizations (such as campfires), and, last but not least, fires at construction sites in salamanders or similar devices fired with propane or No. 2 fuel oil.

Although permits are not required for these types of fires, keep in mind that, under severe dry conditions such as we have experienced the past few summers, the State of Maryland might impose a total ban on outdoor burning. If dry and/or windy conditions exist and you are unsure whether or not there is an outdoor burning ban in effect, consult the Maryland Department of Natural Resources at www.dnr.state.md.us or email them at customerservice@dnr.state.md.us or phone them at 1-877-620-8367. Questions regarding open burning within Montgomery County (including within the City of Gaithersburg) should be directed to the Montgomery County Department of Environmental Protection. For more information, you can visit their website at www.montgomerycountymd.gov/mc/services/dep or email them at help@askDEP.com or phone them at 240-777-7700.

An illustration of a white electrical plug with a black cord. Below it, a cartoon character wearing a blue hard hat and a blue shirt is holding a clipboard and pointing at a red square with a black cross inside, which is connected to the plug's cord.

REMINDER

**All City of Gaithersburg
electrical licenses
will expire on August 31, 2003.**

GRADING TIPS

By Wes Burnette, Permits and Inspections Director

When performing final grading consider the following:

1. Keep the grade a minimum of 8 inches below any non-treated wood framing/siding. Make sure you will be able to achieve this when determining the footing and foundation wall elevation.
2. Seal window wells to the foundation wall with an approved bituminous coating.
3. Window wells need to be filled with gravel and have a drain tied to the perimeter foundation drain tile.
4. The grade needs to be sloped away from the foundation. A minimum of 6 inches of fall within the first 10 feet of horizontal distance from the foundation is required. If there is not 10 feet to the property line, the grade should still fall a minimum of 6 inches at the property line.
5. Swales need to be graded such that all soggy areas are dry within 48 hours of the last rainfall. In all other areas of the yard, the grade should be dry within 24 hours of the last rainfall.
6. Consider placement of the sump pump outfall related to walking surfaces and swales.
7. Carefully review lot designs when the engineer has various lots draining through other lots, especially if lots are sloped. Interior storm drain inlets are encouraged to intercept and convey water underground in densely zoned subdivisions.
8. When providing drains in yards, always make sure the surface of the yard material will convey the water to the drain. Don't use materials such as decorative gravel. Sod, flagstone, or concrete is recommended.
9. 3:1 is the maximum allowable slope.
10. Retaining walls over 3 feet in height may not be constructed of wood. Note that walls under 3 feet in height may not be constructed of wood in some developments where architectural guidelines prohibit such materials.
11. Driveway slopes are not permitted to exceed 10 percent.



SITE DEVELOPMENT APPROVAL OR PERMIT?

By Greg Ryberg,
Site Development Coordinator

The Planning and Code Administration is often asked this question and would like to clarify the difference between these requirements, and how they relate to all development within the City.

The Site Development Approval is the City's official approval of a site plan, which is issued by the Community Planning Team at the very end of the planning process. This occurs after final approval of a site plan has been granted by the Mayor and City Council and/or the Planning Commission, and includes signed and approved plans for the development, as well as any conditions that are required to be met as part of the approval. The plans and conditions reflect the improvements approved on the site, and must be adhered to the builder/developer.

The Site Development Permits are issued by the City for the work required to implement the approved site plan. This covers all work on site and in the City right-of-way, guaranteeing that all work will be in accordance with the approved plans, details, and conditions. Site Development Permits are required before the City can issue building permits on any site. The City must inspect and approve all work on site prior to closing out these permits.

Both Site Development Approvals and Site Development Permits ensure that new development and redevelopment with the City meets the requirements of our City Code, and any other applicable regulations and the specific development conditions imposed by the Mayor and City Council and/or Planning Commission.

ADDRESS NUMBERS

Section 22-97 of the Montgomery County Fire Safety Code requires that all buildings, including private homes must display address numbers - **arabic numbers with a contrasting color background**. Address numbers on single-family homes (detached, attached) must be 5" in height, and on commercial, industrial and multifamily buildings must be 6" in height.



STAIRWAY ENCLOSURES

continued from page 1

- ✓ Do remember this important general rule: fire-rated stairway walls are there for *one* purpose only, to protect people using the stairway to escape from a fire or other emergency in the building.
- ✓ Do not use fire-rated stairway walls for structural support for *anything* else in the building except the stairway itself. No floor joists, support beams, plywood sheathing, etc., are allowed to penetrate the walls protecting an exit stairway.
- ✓ Fire-rated stairway walls must be continuous from the bottom of the stairs to the top of the stairway enclosure. There are no exceptions!
- ✓ All structural supports of a fire-rated enclosure must have the same rating as the enclosure itself, even if they extend beyond the stairway.
- ✓ Do not install any electrical wiring, plumbing, or any other items that penetrate the rated walls in a fire-rated stairway enclosure unless they are for services to the stairway itself, e.g., lights, sprinkler heads in stairway.
- ✓ Duct work may not penetrate a fire rated stair enclosure for any reason, including servicing the stairway (even with a fire damper). Also, duct work is not allowed to pass through the enclosure.
- ✓ Fire rated stairway walls and assemblies must be fully completed and inspected during the shell building phase of construction. They may *not* be left open for access during tenant construction.

If you have any questions about this subject, please feel free to ask your City inspector or to call City Hall and ask for help from a City building or fire official.



Gaithersburg

A CHARACTER COUNTS! CITY

CITY OFFICIALS:

Sidney A. Katz, Mayor

Council Members:

Stanley J. Alster

Geri E. Edens

Henry F. Marraffa, Jr.

John B. Schlichting

Ann T. Somerset

David B. Humpton,

City Manager



This bulletin is published by
the City of Gaithersburg
Planning and Code Administration

Editor:

Patricia Patula, Planner

Consultant:

Jennifer Russel, Director

Planning and Code Administration

Layout:

Maria Fullerton, Graphics Manager

Articles and ideas are welcome.



City of Gaithersburg
Planning and Code Administration

31 South Summit Avenue

Gaithersburg, Maryland 20877

Telephone: 301-258-6330

Fax: 301-258-6336

plancode@ci.gaithersburg.md.us

www.ci.gaithersburg.md.us

BUILDER'S BULLETIN

City of Gaithersburg

Planning and Code Administration

31 South Summit Avenue

Gaithersburg, Maryland 20877